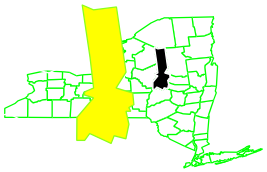
Hiteman Leather Co.

NEW YORK

EPA ID# NYD981560915



EPA REGION 2
CONGRESSIONAL DIST. 23
Herkimer County
Village of West Winfield

Site Description

The Hiteman Leather Company site is located on South Street (Route 51) in the Village of West Winfield, near the intersection of Route 51 with Route 20. The former leather tanning site is approximately 14 acres in size and is bordered to the north by private residences and commercial buildings along Route 20, to the east by Route 51, to the west by the West Winfield Cemetery and to the south by residential properties. Approximately 800 feet of the Unadilla River traverses the lower part of the site, with 4 of the 14 acres on the south bank of the river. The current features of the site include the remaining foundations/concrete pads of the former factory buildings, a macadam parking lot, two small buildings (a garage and shed), three backfilled wastewater lagoons (each approximately 50 feet wide by 350 feet long), a 2-acre wetland, a 5-6 acre open field area, and a small backfilled area in front of an adjacent Village Department of Public Works garage.

The site was operated as a leather tannery from 1820 until 1968, when it was closed. Over the years, the leather tanning industry developed from a tree bark-based tanning process to include a chromium-based process, which was included in Hiteman tannery operations by 1916. By 1964, approximately 180,000 gallons of chromium-containing wastewater was discharged daily from the tannery into three unlined settling lagoons, which ultimately drained into the Unadilla River. At various times, the effluent also drained into the wetlands adjacent to the lagoons. Settled solids in the lagoons were periodically excavated and deposited as bank material around the lagoons. The lagoons were backfilled in 1968 (using the bank material) and the site has been inactive ever since, with the exception of the intermittent use of the buildings for storage, prior to their demolition. Approximately 900 people live within one-half mile of the site.

Site Responsibility: This site is being addressed through federal actions.

NPL LISTING HISTORY
Proposed Date: 09/29/98
Final Date: 01/19/99

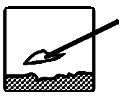
Threats and Contaminants

In August 1959, a fish kill occurred in the Unadilla River near the Hiteman Leather Company facility. An investigation concluded that the fish were killed by toxic substances overflowing from two lagoons on the site. As a result, the lagoons were dredged and a third lagoon was added. However, the inability to reliably achieve wastewater discharge standards required closing of the facility in 1968. Site investigations by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation during 1988-1992 and samples taken by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1994 and 1996 found high levels of chromium in the lagoon area and surrounding soils (including the wetlands) and in surface waters. Lower levels of other metals, pesticides, semi-volatile organics, and volatile organics were also detected in the site soils and contaminants were found in the ground water. Further investigation indicated the deteriorating buildings were unsafe and that pipe covering and other materials throughout the structures were asbestos-based. In addition, concerns were raised over the potential erosion of the north bank of the Unadilla River that could release toxic substances from the former lagoons.

Cleanup Approach

This site is being addressed in two stages: immediate actions and a long-term remedial phase that will focus on the cleanup of the entire site.

Response Action Status



Immediate Actions: The site was fenced during 1994 to limit access by the public. A structural evaluation in 1996 determined that most of the buildings and the smokestack at the site were structurally unsound. Demolition of all but one of the buildings and the smoke stack was performed by EPA during 1996-1997. Asbestos was removed from the buildings in 1996 prior to their demolition; the asbestos was disposed of at an approved off-site disposal facility. In addition, approximately 500 linear feet of riprap was installed along the northern bank of the Unadilla River during November 1996 to insure the river bank's stability. The remaining building was demolished by the estate of the former owner in 1998.

Entire Site: Field work related to the performance of a remedial investigation (RI) to determine the nature and extent of the contamination at and emanating from the site is currently underway. Three rounds of sampling and information gathering have been completed in on-site and off-site locations, with each subsequent round being designed based on information from the prior round. The final round of sampling, which will commence in Spring 2004, will include an on-site wetland and the Unadilla River. This effort will be performed to better define the ecological risk arising from the elevated levels of chromium found in those areas.

The data from this investigative work will be summarized in an RI report and will be followed by the performance of a feasibility study (FS) to identify and evaluate remedial alternatives. It is expected that the RI/FS will be completed in late 2004.

Site Facts: A potentially responsible party (PRP) search was conducted and no viable PRPs have been identified.

In September 2003, EPA provided the Village of West Winfield with funding to develop a Reuse Assessment and Redevelopment Plan for the Hiteman Leather Company site, as part of the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund Redevelopment Initiative.

Cleanup Progress

(Immediate Threat Mitigated by Physical Clean-Up Work; Studies Underway)

The fencing of the site, demolition of the deteriorated buildings and smokestack, removal of asbestos from the site and stabilization of the river bank have mitigated the immediate threat posed by the site. The long term threat is being addressed by the current investigation, which builds upon prior more-limited investigations, and will provide a full characterization of the site for remedy selection.

Site Repositories

West Winfield Library, Bisby Hall, South Street, West Winfield, NY 13491

EPA Region II Superfund Records Center, 290 Broadway, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10007-1866